

June 6, 1882 was the day Zionism began.



Frederick Theodore  
Frelinghuysen - US  
Secretary of State  
1881-1885



Lew Wallace U.S.  
Minister to the  
Ottoman Empire in  
Constantinople -  
1881 to 1885

These two gentlemen spent their 4 years in office as  
dedicated defenders of the Zionist cause.

June 6, 1882 was the day Zionism began. Two Romanian Jews, Mr. Aseher & Mr. Weinberg wrote a letter to Mr. Wallace - US ambassador in Constantinople. They were asking him to plead on their behalf for the Ottoman government to allow millions of European Jews to settle in the Empire. Mr. Wallace seemed to be excited that he was being asked to do this favor for them and he went to see the Ottoman person in charge of immigration and Mr. Wallace was told that Jews were allowed to immigrate to any part of the empire except for Palestine.

The Romanian Jews said in their letter that their group had huge amounts of money and they wanted to "construct roads to the nearest large town or seaport". Of course, what they wanted to do was to import as many weapons as they could and take Palestine by force. In fact, Herzl wrote in his diaries that he planned to train an army in Cypress and he said he would take Palestine by force the way it was taken from him by force.

The Romanian Jews did not want to settle anywhere in the Empire but very close to Palestine. They were there on the mission of Zionism - which was to take Palestine by force.

Mr. Wallace concluded his message to the Secretary of State by saying:

In conclusion, there is nothing to prevent all the Israelites on the earth from settling in Asiatic Turkey. They shall not settle in Palestine-that is the only prohibition.

By 1884, the Ottoman government clearly understood what the mission of the Jews coming to Palestine was and they passed laws forbidding Jews to enter Palestine or any other land in the Empire. Jews were forbidden to buy land in Palestine or to live in Palestine . The US government was defending many Russian Jews who had moved to Palestine because the US government for political reasons had given them US citizenship and both Mr. Wallace and Mr. Frelinghuysen would spend their 4 years in office vigorously defending Zionism.

June 6, 1882  
Messrs. Aseher & Weinberg  
to Mr. Wallace (US ambassador)  
Constantinople

Your Excellency: We, the undersigned delegates of the central committee of Jewish emigration in Roumania, representing forty-nine local committees, beg to approach your excellency for the purpose of craving your assistance and support in behalf of our oppressed coreligionists who are suffering under legal disabilities in the kingdom of Roumania, which render it impossible for them any longer to find means of subsistence in that country, where many thousands are reduced to starvation.

Sufficient funds have been subscribed by the Jewish committees in Roumania to enable many colonies to be formed in the dominions of His Majesty, and we would crave your excellency kindly to procure permission and liberty for our coreligionists to settle in any of the Mutessarafliks of Syria wherever there are available localities.

The points which we desire to know are, viz: Whether Jews on becoming Turkish subjects will be permitted to settle in the waste lands of the Vilayet of Syria, excluding the Pashalik of Palestine free of charge in groups of not more than five hundred families, and whether they will also be permitted to purchase lands and settle on them in agricultural communities.

2d. Whether, if so, they will be exempt from taxation for the next five years.

3d. Whether they will be permitted to construct roads to the nearest large town or seaport.

Some of these societies are wealthy, possessing in some instances a considerable capital, and their members are possessed by no other desire but that of developing the resources of the country and occupying themselves as peaceable citizens.

While only especially representing our Roumanian coreligionists, we would also venture to remind your excellency that owing to the daily recurrence of prosecution and disasters of the most fearful description our brethren in Russia are living in a state of panic-stricken suspense. In many instances they have realized all their worldly goods and abandoned their occupation, not anticipating any check to their desire to emigrate into Turkey, and are now rapidly consuming the capital with which they had hoped to start in their new home.

The matter has become one of the most serious and urgent necessities. Hundreds of thousands of people are awaiting with the utmost anxiety information upon which they can safely act, and your excellency and the great and the philanthropic nation which you represent would be performing an act of the highest benevolence and charity if, owing to your kind intervention in their behalf, they may be relieved from their present dread and extremity, and leave countries in which they have nothing but ill-treatment to anticipate, for one where the experience of their coreligionists has proved they may expect peace and protection, and where they would thankfully become loyal and patriotic subjects of His Magnanimous Majesty the Sultan.

M. Ascher - President of the committee for Bucharest Jewish emigration.  
Moyer Weinberg - Founder and member of the committee in the Kingdom of Roumania.

July 11, 1882  
Mr. Wallace (US ambassador, Constantinople)  
to Mr. Frelinghuysen (US Secretary of State).  
Legation of the United States, Constantinople ,

Sir: Through Mr. L. Oliphant I had an account of the Jewish exodus from Russia, and of the misery the refugees were undergoing in the towns north of this. Some of them having reached Constantinople, were starving in the streets. My sympathy was naturally excited on their behalf.

On the 6th of June last two gentlemen were brought to the legation, and upon introduction presented a paper, of which a copy is enclosed. You will perceive that it is a petition craving assistance for their coreligionists in the Kingdom of Roumania; that the subscribers represent themselves as delegates acting for forty-nine local committees in their country; and that the point they wished to gain, through my services unofficially rendered, was the privilege of colonizing in such districts of Syria as contained localities available for the purpose. They seemed respectable men and very much in earnest. Mr. Oliphant was personally acquainted with them, and he recommended them to be what they seemed. The interview resulted in my telegraphing for permission to give them and their people my good offices in obtaining for them, if possible, permission to colonize themselves in Turkey.

Mr. Oliphant and Mr. Alexander, both respectable gentlemen, were the agents of the movement in Constantinople. They met me, by my invitation, at the legation. A discussion of the best mode of procedure was had, and an agreement reached. I was to visit the Porte and use my best efforts to get the privilege sought; having obtained it, my connection with the business was to end; they were to manage the immigration and the settlement of the colonists.

Agreeably to this arrangement, I visited the minister of foreign affairs, who informed me that the matter had been before His Majesty's council of ministers, which had decided affirmatively that the Jews from whatever parts could come and settle in Turkey; that there was a general law of immigration in force which must be taken for the guidance of such as chose to come; that they could come when they pleased, and would be settled in groups of two hundred or two hundred and fifty families, that they could settle on any unoccupied lands in Mesopotamia, about Aleppo, or in the regions of the Orontes River; that they could not establish themselves in Palestine; that the firman of the Sultan was unnecessary, for, having once approved the law, he could not be called on to do so again; that every colonist was simply bound to become an Ottoman subject.

This, you will readily see, covered all my part of the business. The refugees could come immediately; the lands at their service were good; the law was liberal and encouraging; if they behaved themselves they would do well. I made a report to Messrs. Oliphant and Alexander and discharged myself from the connection.

A little later, when the affair had an appearance of taking on extraordinary proportions, possibilities of trouble to the immigrants presented themselves, and I thought it safer to have the worthy minister of foreign affairs put his replies to me in writing. With that view, I addressed him with a note, of which a copy is enclosed. In an interview, the undersecretary (Mr. Artin Effendi) assured me that as the immigration would be under the law, no further assurances were necessary; and as that seemed reasonable, I was satisfied, and did not press an answer to my communication. I make an enclosure of the note because it sets out the minister's replies on a nearer approach to exactitude.

For your more perfect understanding of the scheme as it now stands, and to enable you to answer questions upon the subject, should such be addressed to you, I take the liberty of making an enclosure of a copy of the Turkish law of immigration (translated).

In conclusion, there is nothing to prevent all the Israelites on the earth from settling in Asiatic Turkey. They shall not settle in Palestine~~that~~ is the only prohibition.

I have, &c., LEW. WALLACE.

Mr. Wallace to Said Pasha.  
Legation of the United States,  
Constantinople , June 13, 1882.

Excellency: In the interview which I had the honor to have with you yesterday, I begged permission to express my great personal interest in measures for the relief of refugee Jews congregating in the north and to inquire, purely in the way of good offices and unofficially, if His Majesty or the Sublime Porte would be charitably disposed to allow refugee Jews to come into Turkey, and colonize on the public lands.

You were good enough to inform me that the subject had been under consideration by His Majesty's Council, which had decided to allow colonization by those people, provided they did not settle on lands within the limits of Palestine. I asked them what localities they would be permitted to settle. You replied they might settle about Aleppo and in Mesopotamia, and the region of the Orontes River. I then asked if they would suffer to come in groups. You replied in groups of two hundred or two hundred and fifty houses, by which I understood families. I inquired if it would be necessary to have an imperial firman, or a permit in form from His Majesty before entering upon the movement of the people. You replied that there was a law already existing which covered the immigration proposed; that as the law had received His Majesty's sanction no further permit would be required from His Majesty. To my final inquiry, if I was at liberty to notify the parties who would interest themselves in the matter as active managers that they could begin the movement immediately, you said there was no objection to my doing so.

Now, excellency, should the movement take on the large proportions I anticipate, there would be not a little responsibility attaching to me; and to relieve me of that, and enable the immigration to be conducted strictly according to the wishes and decision of His Majesty and the Sublime Porte, I have the honor to submit if it would not be better that you communicate your replies to me in writing, and in convenient form, that I may in turn communicate them to the persons to be entrusted with the active management. Would you allow a further expression, it is, in my judgment, especially important that the conditions which you desire to impose upon the colonization should be stated with explicitness. Such, for instance, as what the Sublime Porte holds to be the limits of Palestine, and the localities outside those limits to which you prefer the movement should be directed.

Your excellency will of course understand this, and my whole connection with the affair, to be unofficial.

It would be a great kindness to the people in question, if your excellency would favor me with the communication requested at your earliest convenience. I avail myself, &c., &c., LEW WALLACE.

Colonization in Turkey by Foreign Families.

Conditions established by the imperial government with regard to the colonization in Turkey of families coming from foreign countries who would like to settle on becoming subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

Article 1. The colonists will first take an oath to be always faithful to His Majesty the Sultan and accept the conditions of subjects of the empire without the least reservation or restriction.

Art. 2. They will conform to the actual and future laws of the empire.

Art. 3. In common with other subjects of the empire, colonists will be free from all kinds of hindrance in the exercise of the religion they profess, and they will enjoy without any distinction the same religious privileges as all the other classes of subjects of the empire. If in the localities that may be given to them by the government for their installation there be any chapels of their rite and these in sufficient number, they will perform their devotions in them, but if they are to form new villages, they will apply for and obtain of the imperial government the permission to erect such chapels as they may need.

Art. 4. In the provinces of the empire that will be found suitable for their installation there will be chosen from government lands the most fertile and most healthy tracts, and to each colonist will be granted such a portion of land as may be suitable to his means, to enable him to carry on agriculture or any other trade.

Art. 5. The colonists being established on government lands, which will be given them gratuitously will be exempt from all land or personal taxation for six years, if they are established in Roumelia, and for twelve years if they are established in Asia.

Art. 6. In like manner the colonists are exempt from military service or its equivalent in money, those in Roumelia for six years, those in Asia for twelve years.

Art. 7. After the expiration of these terms of exemption the colonists will be subjected to all taxes and imposts on the same footing as the rest of the subjects of the empire.

Art. 8. The colonists will not be allowed to sell the land given to them gratuitously by the government, excepting after a lapse of at least twenty years.

Art. 9. Those who before the expiration of this delay may desire to leave the country or change their nationality will restore to the government their lands. In like manner they will be obliged to leave to the government without any compensation whatever all buildings they may have raised upon the lands, which will no longer be regarded as their property.

Art. 10. The colonists will acknowledge the authorities of the Caza or of the Landyok, to which the villages may belong, and little boroughs where they are established, and they will be governed and protected as the other subjects of the empire.

Art. 11. If before the expiration of the term of their exemption these colonists be obliged to change their abode and to establish themselves in any other place of the empire, they will be allowed to do it; but the term of their exemption from all taxation and imposts will still date from the time when the first ground was given to them.

Art. 12. The colonists must not have been criminals in their former country or of doubtful behavior, but must be honest men, laborers and tradesmen. And the imperial government reserves to itself the right to expel from the empire those who may subsequently be proved to have been in their own countries criminals or of bad character.

Art. 13. As each family, wishing to come to Turkey in order to colonize, will have granted to them as much ground as their means require before they start for Turkey, registers will have to be kept, containing minutely and in detail their names, their qualities, their means, and the sum of capital they possess. These must be put up and forwarded to the imperial government by its legations and consulates abroad, where there are any, and it is established that each family must have a capital equal to a sum of at least 60 medjidies in gold (about 1,350 francs, or \$54).

Art. 14. From the time of their departure from abroad as well as on arrival in Turkey, the consuls of the Porte abroad and the imperial authorities at home will have to give these colonists necessary facilities for the transport of their goods and luggage. Their passports will be given to them free of charge by all the Ottoman consuls.

The council of the Toujimat (of reform) considers it incumbent upon any families desiring to colonize in Turkey to inform the government thereof at least two months before-hand, so that by the resolutions or steps that have already been taken, the government may have time to designate in the provinces of the empire which may be chosen for their colonization convenient lands to be distributed amongst the colonists, so that upon their arrival in Turkey they should not incur loss of time and fatigue. Consequently instructions will be given to the representatives and to the consuls of the empire abroad in conformity therewith.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1882/d384>